



Community Testimonials

“Thanks to Evan, I have witnessed the Aspen Institute showing up in an authentic and intentional way that aligns with the values of our community throughout the Roaring Fork and Colorado River Valleys. His work is making an impact in our area, and I hope for a continuation of this important work, that only succeeds at the speed of building trust.”

Beatriz Soto | **Conservation Colorado, Protégete Director**

“Evan has been working with small communities in western Garfield County and I have had the pleasure of working with him. He has created the Colorado River Valley Economic Development Partnership which will bring much needed jobs to the area - New Castle to Parachute. The CRVEDP is a proactive coalition that targets industries that would benefit from investing in the area. I appreciate Evan’s outside-the-box-thinking, organization and positive energy he brings to meetings. It is clear he is sincere and clearly wants to see our small communities succeed.”

Tommy Klein | **City of Rifle, City Manager**

“I believe the collective work of the Hurst Community Initiative is bringing together individuals and organizations that may not have had an opportunity to listen and learn together. Evan creates an environment that promotes genuine dialogue — and even difficult conversations, which is essential to growth and innovation. I look forward to the next phase of his work and the sustainable impacts of the Hurst Community Initiative.”

Maria Tarajano Rodman | **Valley Settlement, Executive Director**

“It has been my pleasure this past year to work with Evan as he facilitated a steering committee of our community leaders to identify opportunities and threats to our Grand River Valley (Parachute & Battlement Mesa). His leadership, facilitation skills, and networking efforts have proven immeasurably helpful as we tackle the challenges facing our community, and indeed, the region.”

Peg Portscheller | **Colorado Mountain College, Board of Trustees**

“In the past two years, Evan has surfaced in a few meetings where his presence brought new ideas and suggestions that were always well received. Particularly in the mental health arena, usually the same individuals, representing the same groups, will be at the table. Evan’s even-keeled energy, professionalism, and curiosity for all that he would hear, provided thought-provoking conversations and some new ways of thinking that have been long-overdue. In my many years of working inside the valley and in other counties, having a neutral person with no vested interest in any agency or agenda can be pivotal. Evan is the perfect person for these moments and may actually be someone that can help impact the conversations and community in general, which overall will lead to tangible change.”

Michelle Muething, LPC | **Aspen Hope Center, Executive Director**



"As a new nonprofit leader in our community, Evan's work to foster connections and grow new collaborations is not only important, but critical to how we will be able to work together and find sustainable solutions for our entire region. Moving forward, the focus and initiatives that have been outlined as next steps — specifically the collection, analysis, and distribution of good rural data —will be pivotal to our success."

Breeze Richardson | **Aspen Public Radio, Executive Director**

"In the last two years, I feel much more connected to the Aspen Institute. Evan has made the work of my nonprofit, The Savings Collaborative (formerly LaMedichi) more visible. Moreover, he has made the work of the Aspen Institute more accessible and integral to the Roaring Fork and Colorado River Valleys. Perhaps most importantly, Evan has connected me to my peers and strengthened our collective ability to find collaborative solutions that make a positive difference in the community, particularly among the people in the most vulnerable circumstances. Under Evan's guidance, the community engagement work for the Hurst Community Initiative has become a vital part of our regional collaboration. I strongly believe in the potential of this work and would love to see the program continue to grow."

Barbara Freeman | **Financial Empower Initiative + The Savings Collaborative (formerly LaMedichi), Executive Director**

"Evan believes, as do I, that regional collaborative dialogue is the best way to find solutions for the challenges of the day. To this end, he has worked to bring a diverse collection of folks together on multiple fronts to increase understanding and work cooperatively. I have personally participated in the regional speaker series and a thought-provoking leadership seminar. Evan put some structure around, and has become the biggest cheerleader, of our economic development conversations in the Colorado River Valley. Evan's value for the entire region is just beginning to bear fruit and I would like to see the program continue and increase its reach and influence."

Jeff Layman | **Town of Silt, Town Administrator**

"I'm grateful for the relationships I now have with leaders who serve our community, thanks to participating in the Hurst Leadership Seminar. Now more than ever, we need conversations between people with different lived experiences and perspective, and I support Evan's work to see what's possible when we bring people together."

Jennifer Wherry | **Alpine Legal Services, Executive Director**

"I had the opportunity to participate in the inaugural year of the Hurst Leadership Seminar, and met with elected officials in the Roaring Fork, Colorado, and Eagle River Valleys weekly through a series of guided discussions. I daresay this program format, under Evan's direction, is the most effective leadership/relationship building program I have ever experienced. Evan's work at the Aspen Institute has the potential to change the future for the betterment of all our communities."

Kathy Chandler-Henry | **Eagle County, Board of Commissioners**



“The Hurst Leadership Seminar was a remarkable opportunity to not only explore ideas of human-scale, community leadership and collaboration, but also create strong relationships with my community peers that will help us all achieve greater things. Evan's role was pivotal in helping us comfortably explore those ideas and quickly create bonds among the group members. He managed to be both a guide -- fostering conversation and connection -- and an integral part of the group. I think such an intimate experience could only be successful with the trust and confidence in its guide, and Evan provided that effortlessly.”

Matt Scherr | **Eagle County, Board of Commissioners**

I have clearly experienced the value of having Evan facilitate/support conversations and working groups. We have critical issues on the table and people with great ideas and willingness to collaborate. At the same time, all those important players have their plates full. Their job and/or their time does not allow the space to convene and even simply organize the collective effort. Evan has done that masterfully! The impact is astounding and growing.

Debbie Wilde | **Valley Life For All, Executive Director + Glenwood Springs Housing Stability Coalition, Director**

“I believe Evan’s work in developing the Hurst Community Initiative for community leaders to come together and share ideas and have an open dialogue has been instrumental in keeping us engaged – and inspires us to continue to do the work we do. Growing this program now that Covid is becoming more endemic can only help us to further the community-wide goals that make this an amazing place to live.”

Luis Yllanes | **5Point Film, Executive Director + Town of Carbondale Trustee**

“I want to share my appreciation for the Hurst Leadership Seminar. I feel that Aspen Institute’s local programs are of great value and a great connection for local leaders. The seminar has created bonds and open communication across our valley that will serve our community for years to come.”

Torre | **City of Aspen, Mayor**

“Evan does great work connecting key community members that otherwise would not be able to do so. The programs he manages create opportunities for dialogue between stakeholders that otherwise would not exist, and this is critical to the continued growth and development of our community. His thoughtfulness, approachability, and innovative way of thinking are assets to the programs he runs, and in consequence to our community.”

Paz Escobar | **Hotel Jerome, Human Resources Manager**

I participated in some outstanding programming that brought leaders together that I otherwise would not have connected with. This is important work and Evan is a passionate steward of the mission.

David A. Cook | **Aspen Daily News, Publisher**



“In my short time working within the Roaring Fork Valley I have found Evan Zislis to be instrumental in helping me connect with key community partners, who like LIFT-UP, are serving those who are dealing with food insecurity. He has the knowledge, skill and passion to be able to connect people, organizations and groups and have them work in a collaborative manner to help achieve their goals and objectives, ensuring a positive outcome in finding the solution to the shared challenges along the Parachute-Aspen Corridor.”

Ivan Jackson | **LIFT-UP, Executive Director**

“We are living in unprecedented times that require collaboration and trust-building to spur innovation and economic growth. Thanks to Evan Zislis' thoughtful and inclusive leadership, diverse voices are problem solving and co-creating solutions to address the challenges and opportunities resulting from the pandemic. Our program, Latinos and Society, has on several occasions collaborated with Evan and the Hurst Community Initiative to uplift Latino voices and leaders making up 30% of the Roaring Fork Valley and adjacent communities. I look forward to continuing to find ways to integrate local Latino experience into the national narrative of economic mobility.”

Domenika Lynch | **Aspen Institute Latinos & Society Program, Executive Director**

“I’ve worked closely with Evan in developing and implementing several seminar programs in the Roaring Fork Valley—two for elected and non-elected leaders and another for high school students. In the course of working with Evan on those programs, I’ve come to know him well—and to be exposed to the other work he is doing as part of the Hurst Community Initiative. A few observations: First, Evan is a joy to work with. His commitment to mission is unsurpassed, as is his attention to detail, both administrative and in his sensitivity to working with people in a small community where personal relationships are paramount. Second, I have been impressed by Evan’s vision for expansion—a comprehensive vision which is meaningful not only for the Institute’s work in the Valley but for the flourishing of the region more generally. Third, Evan’s work is a microcosm of the ways in which various Institute programs can work together to address local/regional needs and develop values-based leaders for the future. In short, because of the value of Evan’s work to the Valley and beyond, and to the integration of Institute’s programs, I strongly endorse both him and his work.”

Todd Breyfogle, PhD | **Aspen Institute Executive Leadership Seminars, Executive Director**

“Evan’s work with the Hurst Community Initiative puts *Aspen* in the Aspen Institute. His leadership and facilitation of solutions at the community level is precisely what the Institute needs to make the necessary contribution to the region it calls home. He is one of our organization’s greatest collaborators, developing opportunities to bring the knowledge and assets of other programs to the region. I look forward to working with him and hope he gets every opportunity to expand his program.”

Tom Farrey | **Aspen Institute Sports & Society Program, Executive Director**



“Evan has generously stepped in to help with the Aspen Institute’s Energy & Environment Program partnership between the White River National Forest and the Wilderness Workshop to plan a community event during Latino Conservation Week. Evan has been helping to serve as the Institute’s contact on the ground and has provided critical and valuable support and insight to on-the-ground logistical coordination and relationships management.”

Greg Gershuny | **Aspen Institute Energy & Environment Program, Executive Director**

“Evan brings a fantastic energy to his work, and he is a valuable member of the Aspen Institute community.”

Sara Tsien Zetterli | **Aspen Institute Program on Philanthropy & Social Innovation, Associate Director Finance and Operations**

“Over the past two+ years, it has been impressive to see Evan create and bring to life the Hurst Community Initiative. The thought that he has put into this community-based program is absolutely impressive and seeing and hearing about how the communities are responding and participating is exciting. We are fortunate to live in a community that supports this type of outreach. I look forward to seeing how this continues to grow over the next several years.”

Richard Stettner | **Aspen Institute Aspen Campus Facilities and Operations, Vice President**

“It has been a pleasure to partner with Evan to develop a strategy to create a State of Play report for the Hurst Community Initiative. His in-depth knowledge of the region and his commitment to collaboration and equity has made our project stronger, ensuring our impact will sustain beyond our research process. The Hurst Community Initiative has been critical to our ability to expand our efforts into this region.”

Jennifer Lerner | **Aspen Institute’s Sports & Society Program, Deputy Director**

"I believe Evan's work is critical to reach new audiences that can become part of the Aspen Institute community. Evan is dedicated to the Aspen Institute and deeply involved in many efforts to improve the organization internally and externally. It is my sincere hope that the Hurst Community Initiative continues to grow. Evan is the leader that can spearhead this work with excitement and care.”

Seth Henderson | **Aspen Institute Aspen Global Leadership Network, Senior Manager, Impact Strategy & Operations**